

The Royal Marsden School

ATTENDANCE, ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRESSION POLICY

This policy has been developed as part of the School's commitment to provide a supportive learning environment in which encouragement is given to all students to develop a range of skills, abilities and approaches to their studies and other activities.

It sets out how the School will act where there are concerns about a student's attendance, engagement and/or progress, in order to provide students with appropriate pastoral support and guidance, and the process that it would follow in the event that the student may have breached School regulations.

1. Aims and Objectives

The School aims to:

- Support and encourage students to achieve their full potential in their studies and in developing lifelong skills and competencies;
- Enhance the overall learning environment by encouraging active participation through regular attendance in all areas of study;
- Use attendance and engagement as two of the factors to be taken into account in reviewing a student's commitment to, and performance in, their academic studies and in developing an appropriate response to specific concerns about performance.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

- Attendance – the physical presence on a timely basis of the student at teaching events or other required events or activities as prescribed by the School;
- Engagement – the active involvement of the student in their studies as evidenced, for example, by meaningful contributions to teaching events, appropriate preparatory work in advance of teaching events, constructive working with fellow students as required by the structure of the programme of study;
- Progress – the achievement of satisfactory academic results, evidence of developing academic skills appropriate to the programme of study, the development of ancillary skills as appropriate to the particular programme of study.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Students' obligations in relation to attendance, engagement and progress

Students are required to attend all teaching events; if they are unable to do so, they must report their absence to the School at the earliest opportunity, guidance on this is available in the Module Hand Book. Where attendance drops below 80%, a discussion will be held with the Course Leader regarding their ability to complete the module of study.

All students are required to sign a register before morning and afternoon sessions. The register will be monitored by the Module Leader, and all data relating to absences will be input into the student database.

Students are expected to arrive promptly for each session to avoid disruption.

3.2 The School's obligations in relation to attendance, engagement and progress

Module Leaders are to ensure that the register is signed before all morning and afternoon sessions.

Where a student's employer has funded their studies, their manager may be informed of any non-negotiated absence.

Very occasionally, due to unforeseen circumstances, i.e. adverse weather, the School may cancel a study session. Students will be notified of this through Moodle and / or a telephone call to any contact numbers held on the database.

In order to identify students who may be struggling with their studies and provide pastoral support and guidance at the earliest opportunity, Course Leaders shall monitor, in consultation with relevant academic tutors the attendance of their undergraduate and postgraduate taught students who are registered on award-bearing courses.

4. Monitoring of students completing their dissertations

In order to ensure that the School is able to demonstrate taught postgraduate students' attendance and engagement during their dissertation period, academic staff who act as dissertation supervisors should maintain a record after each meeting with the student. They should also make notes of any contact with the student (e.g. by email, phone, Skype.)

5. Procedures for dealing with concerns in relation to a student's attendance engagement and progress

5.1 Review of a student's attendance, engagement and/or progress

Course Leaders shall review the attendance records and mark profiles of students on credit-bearing taught programmes. Personal Tutors have access to their students' attendance records, and should monitor their students' attendance and provide support to those who have missed teaching events. A full review of students' attendance and marks shall be carried out by the Course Leader on a regular basis, no less than once per term, to ensure that students receive relevant support.

Where the Course Leader has concerns about a student's attendance record and/or his/her ability to engage or catch up with studies, the student shall be invited to an initial meeting. In the event that the student has already reported the reasons for being absent, an initial meeting should still be offered so that the Course Leader can provide appropriate guidance and support. The initial meeting is an opportunity for the Course Leader and Personal Tutor to explore any reasons that may be affecting a student's attendance, engagement and/or progress, and provide pastoral care before issues develop further.

5.2 Initial Meeting

A nominated colleague (Personal Tutor or Module Leader) shall invite the student to an initial meeting with the Course Leader to explore what appropriate support could be provided.

The nominated colleague(s) should note down a record of the discussion at the meeting.

In the event that a student had concerns about the quality of teaching or content of the course, and therefore chose not to attend, the Course Leader shall report the reasons to the Head of School for appropriate action.

Following the initial meeting, the Course Leader may decide the following action(s):

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- a. take no further action. As it is important for students not to miss teaching events, however, the nominated colleague(s) should continue to monitor the student's attendance, engagement and/or progress;
- b. refer the student to any appropriate support services that the Course Leader considers it would benefit the student;
- c. invoke the Fitness to Study procedure in respect of a student whom the Course Leader has identified as potentially being unfit. (The Fitness to Study procedure may be consulted via Moodle.

If a student does not attend the initial meeting nor provides an explanation for the absence nor seeks an appropriate alternative time to meet, the Course Leader shall ask the Head of School to consider whether the student has demonstrated that s/he was engaging with the process (e.g. by reporting absences, meeting with Module Leaders to catch up with missed work, etc.). If the student has already reported absences and appears to have caught up with missed work, no further formal action is required. If, on the other hand, the Head of School has concerns that a student may not be engaging with the School's processes, the student will be invited to a formal meeting as described below.

5.2 Formal Meeting

The student will be invited to a Formal Meeting in the event that:

- the student's attendance, engagement or progress continues to be a cause for concern;
- the student did not attend the initial meeting, has not reported absences and appears not to be engaging with the School's processes.

The letter will include the following:

- a. a statement of concern for the student's welfare/progress on the course, and the wish to provide the student with guidance and support;
- b. a record of his/her attendance, engagement and/or progress and any concerns;
- c. a copy of the notes from the discussions held at the initial meeting (where available);
- d. an explanation of whom, in addition to the Head of School and student, will be attending the meeting;
- e. the date, time, place of the Formal Meeting;
- f. the right of the Head of School (or another nominated colleague) to take action (as set out below) in the event that, having been properly notified, the student does not attend nor request an appropriate alternative and there is no good cause to explain the absence.

The student will also be advised to bring along any supporting documentation, including any extenuating circumstances.

The Head of School may delegate the task of meeting with the student to an academic colleague.

The letter will provide the student with at least 5 working days (Saturdays, Sundays and School closure days excepted) before the meeting. If, having been duly notified, a student does not attend the Formal Meeting, nor provides an explanation for the absence nor seeks an appropriate alternative, the Head of School shall consider the information available and take one of the actions in paragraph 5.3.2 in the student's

absence. A student may submit a written statement but may not be represented by a third party if absent from a meeting.

The Head of School may agree to rearrange the scheduling of a meeting if requested by the student but will not normally do so without good cause or on more than one occasion. If a student does not attend a scheduled meeting and cannot demonstrate good cause for so doing, the Head of School may issue a Formal Warning (if appropriate).

The Head of School shall invite such members of staff as are required to determine the facts concerning the cause for concern either to submit written statements or to attend part of the meeting. The student may, if s/he wishes, bring an accompanying person. In all cases the student shall answer any questions raised at the meeting. Neither the student nor the School shall be represented by a legal practitioner. The student should notify the Head of School at least one working day in advance of the meeting (Saturdays, Sundays and School closure days excepted) if they intend to be accompanied and the identity of their supporter.

5.3 Conduct of a formal attendance, engagement and progress meeting

5.3.1 The meeting shall proceed in the following order:

- a. the Head of School shall set out the concerns and evidence regarding the attendance, engagement and/or progress of the student. The student shall have an opportunity to ask questions about the concerns and supporting evidence.
- b. The student shall have an opportunity to present information relevant to the matters of concern raised. Wherever possible, information presented, in particular relating to any mitigating circumstances which the student considers have impeded their attendance, engagement and/or progress should be supported by appropriate documentation. The Head of School shall have an opportunity to ask questions concerning the information presented by the student.

5.3.2 Following the formal meeting, the Head of School may decide the following action(s):

- a. take no further formal action. As it is important for students not to miss teaching events, however, the nominated colleague(s) should continue to monitor the student's attendance, engagement and/or progress;
- b. refer the student to appropriate student support services at the School or their employer where the Head of School considers that a student would benefit from the support service(s);
- c. determine that the student has committed an offence as the student has failed to meet the School's requirements in relation to attendance, engagement and progress and issue the student with a Formal Head of School's warning;
- d. invoke the Fitness to Study procedure in respect of a student whom the Head of School has identified as potentially being unfit. (The Fitness to Study procedure may be consulted via Moodle.

In determining whether a Formal Head of School's Warning should be issued, the Head of School may take into account any information presented by the student in explanation of his or her actions. However, in determining whether such information should be taken into account the Head of School must consider whether such

information was, or could have been, presented to the School in a timely manner, noting that the General Regulations state that a student must inform the relevant School Services Office at once of any change of circumstances and whether the non-disclosure of this information is further evidence of the student's failure to engage with their studies.

The Head of School should confirm his/her decision in writing to the student within five working days (Saturdays, Sundays and School closure days excepted).

5.3.3 A written record of the meeting will be made by the Course Leader who should contain clear action notes and the student's responsibilities, to ensure that the situation and/or events leading to this formal meeting will be addressed. To ensure consistency, a template may be used by the. A copy of this record will be given to the student and also placed on the student's file for the duration of the student's period of registration with the School. If an action plan was discussed and agreed then it will be reviewed within a set period of time as determined by the Head of School. Should the concerns which led to the formal meeting persist or not be addressed or be insufficiently addressed within the time period, a further formal meeting will be called by the Head of School.

5.4 Second Formal Meeting

In the event that a student's attendance, engagement and progress continue to cause concern, a Second Formal Meeting will be arranged as described in Paragraph 5.2 above. In addition to the actions available above, the Head of School may refer the student to a **School Student Discipline Committee** to determine action.

6 Appeals

There is no right of appeal against the outcome of an Initial Meeting with nominated colleague(s), or the Head of School's decision following a Formal Meeting.

7 Confidentiality

A copy of the formal record of an attendance, engagement and/or progress meeting and of any formal written warnings will be retained on the student's file during their period of study and registration with the School. Where appropriate, this information may be retained in a more secure format, for example where highly personal or sensitive material is disclosed and discussed. These records will be removed from the file in accordance with normal records retention processes once the student has completed their studies.

Information relating to actions taken under these procedures will remain confidential to the Head of School, the Student's Personal Tutor and such other members of School staff as are involved in the process. This information may also be used to inform relevant professional, statutory and regulatory and funding bodies.

8. Reporting the outcomes of attendance and progress meetings

The Head of School shall complete an annual report of the outcomes of attendance, engagement and/or progress meetings to the Joint Board of Study.